

INFORMATION SHEET

Prerelease centers and sex offenders HB552

Decisions on which offenders are placed in prerelease centers already are made locally. The state cannot and does not force a prerelease to accept any offender. Neither the Department of Corrections nor the Board of Pardons and Parole make those decisions. In each community with a prerelease center, a local screening committee has the final say on who enters the prerelease.

Local screening committees are composed of representatives of law enforcement, community leaders such as attorneys and business owners, elected officials, state probation and parole, federal probation, and prerelease staff.

Screening committee members have decades of experience living and working in their communities. Most have extensive knowledge of offender and corrections issues and that expertise cannot be matched by county commissioners.

Screening committees encourage public input in their decision-making process for community corrections placements.

State law (53-1-203 MCA) tells the department to develop, maintain and expand prerelease centers "for purposes of preparing inmates of a Montana prison who are approaching parole eligibility or discharge for release into the community, providing an alternative placement for offenders who have violated parole or probation, and providing a sentencing option for felony offenders"

The same law directs the department to "encourage the establishment of programs at the local and state level for the rehabilitation and education of felony offenders." That's exactly what prerelease centers do, and creating unnecessary barriers to the centers serving offenders is contrary to the intent of those laws.

At any time, about 75 sex offenders who have completed treatment are unable to leave prison because they do not have a prerelease bed available. This results in them remaining in prison from six months to several years longer than they otherwise would, resulting in higher cost to taxpayers.

The average sex offender in prison spends almost six years there, compared with an average of just under four years for all offenders. We believe this bill has the potential to increase that time by creating another means of closing the doors of prerelease centers to sex offenders.

Sex offenders are not commonplace in prerelease centers and the existing process does a good job of regulating placement. Over the past 10 years, an average of only 52 sex offenders per year were placed in prerelease centers that had a combined annual population of 1,229. On average, screening committees in Missoula and Billings turn down 87-90 percent of sex offender applications.

Treated sex offenders are less likely to commit another sex crime. The re-offense rate among untreated sex offenders is 26 percent. The re-offense rate among treated sex offenders is 2 percent.

Sex offenders return to communities once they leave prison. The best possible circumstances are for them to return first to prerelease centers for the kinds of services and supervision that provide them the best possible chance of a successful transition. This bill won't prevent sex offenders from returning to a community; it only will prevent some from doing it successfully.

About four out of every 10 inmates at Montana State Prison are sex offenders and about 335 of those are waiting for treatment.

Passages Center (Billings): Dave Armstrong CEO
Established: 2007

- Jan Begger – Director of Passages, Masters in Management, Bachelors in Human Services, Licensed Addictions Counselor, 20 years with Alternatives, Inc.
- Detective T.J. Vlado – approximately 15 years with the Billings Police Department
- James "Ziggy" Ziegler – area businessman, former Yellowstone County Commissioner, member of Cursillo at Montana State Prison for more than 30 years, employer of pre-release residents at Stella's Bakery (local restaurant), Alternatives, Inc. Board of Directors 1980-1984 and 2006-present
- Sgt. Carolyn Pluhar – approximately 20 years at the Yellowstone County Detention Center. Has first hand knowledge of many offenders.
- Barry Ivanhoff – approximately 10 years with State Probation and Parole
- Mike Sullivan, MSW * – Director of South Central Treatment Associates, MSOTA counselor. Specializes in the treatment of sex offenders.

Alpha Center (Billings): Dave Armstrong CEO
Established: 1980

- Betty Ann Roan – Deputy Administrator of Alternatives, Inc., 21 years with Alternatives, 15 years with the Mental Health Center, Licensed Addictions Counselor
- Randy Gowen – approximately 25 years with State Probation and Parole
- Sgt. Carolyn Pluhar – approximately 20 years at the Yellowstone County Detention Center
- Officer Mike Guy – 22 years with the Billings Police Department
- Penny Strong – Alternatives, Inc. Board of Directors member and local attorney, formerly Chief Public Defender
- Steve Willis – United States Probation Office
- Teri Woog – approximately 15 years with the United States Probation Office
- Mike Sullivan, MSW * – Director of South Central Treatment Associates, MSOTA counselor. Works exclusively with sex offenders.

* Each sex offender referred to Alpha is pre-screened by Mike Sullivan, M.S.W. In many cases he or others in practice with him have previously worked with these offenders. No sex offender is accepted unless accepted for treatment with an MSOTA Counselor.

Butte Prerelease & Transitional Center: Mike Thatcher, CEO; Established: 1983

Jay Grant Administrator 17 years with CCCS
Connie Kennedy Retired but former President of the Butte Chamber of Commerce
Tom Brophy Retired 25 on screening committee
Jerome McCarthy Capt of Detention Center 17 years on Butte/Silverbow LEA
Matt Rohan Butte Probation and Parole Officer

Great Falls Transition Center: Paul Cory, CEO
Established: 1984

Detective Lt. Rob Moccasin – Great Falls PD
Det. Jeff Ivers Cascade County Sheriffs Office
Mike Redpath POII Department of Corrections
Alan Scanlon Great Falls Prerelease Director of Treatment Services
 They also Rotate there board members:
Joe Boyle, President, Crossroads Counseling and Consulting, Inc.
Bill Quest, Retired Vice President Energy West
Joel Thompson, Deputy County Attorney
Curtis G. Thompson, Attorney, Thompson, Potts and Donovan
Herb Waltermire, Retired Executive Director Job Service
Rev. Anthony Gregori, Retired Catholic Clergy
Leo Rivers, US Probation
Dan Donovan, Attorney, Thompson, Potts and Donovan
Gavin McCluey, Financial Consultant, Wells Fargo Investment
Lee W. Scott, Retired US Secret Service
Dan Peterson, Controller, Divine Brothers Distributing
Gary McFerrin, HUB International
Mike Tabacco, Guy Tabacco Construction
Karen Grove, Trust Officer, Davidson Trust Company

MISSOULA CORRECTIONAL SERVICES: Sue Wilkins, CEO
Established: 1980 (State); 1994 (Private non-Profit)

- Sue Wilkins – Executive Director of MCS since facility became nonprofit in 1994. Bachelor of Arts Degree with double major – Social Work and Sociology. 1980-1994 worked for the State of Montana, Department of Corrections including 7 years as the Director of the State DOC prerelease facility.
- David Wiltfong – Treatment Coordinator of MCS. Bachelor of Science Degree. Has worked for MCS since 2002.
- Mike Frellick – Retired Captain from the Montana Highway Patrol where he worked for 28 years. Served for 5 years on the St. Patrick Hospital Advisory Board including one year as Chairman. Is currently a Board Member of the Grizzly Scholarship Association serving as vice-president.
- Karen Townsend – Retired Senior Deputy Attorney of the Missoula County Attorneys' Office. Worked for the County Attorneys' office for 30+ years. Continues to serve as a Substitute Municipal Court Judge. Karen also works with the University of Montana School of Law Trial competition team and has been asked to serve as a special prosecutor for several rural Montana counties.
- Rob Scheben – Crime Prevention Officer Missoula Police Department. Has been an officer for the City 10+ years.
- Amy Gault – Currently a Parole and Probation Officer II with the Department of Corrections. Has worked for DOC for 10 years. Prior to that worked for MCS as a Case Manager and later as a misdemeanor probation officer. Bachelor of Arts Degree.
- Kathleen Becarr – Currently a Parole and Probation Officer II with the Department of Corrections. Has worked for DOC 12+ years.
- Chuck Hill – Currently a Parole and Probation Officer II with the Department of Corrections. Previously worked as a P & P Officer I, an Intensive Supervision Officer and at the Montana State Prison both as a Correctional Officer and as a Classification and Treatment Specialist. He has worked for DOC for 20 years.

(Note P & P Officers II rotate on the screening committee)

**MCS requires a unanimous vote of all screening committee members for a sex offender to be approved for placement in its facility.

Helena Prerelease: Mike Ruppert, CEO; Established: 2000

Amy Tenney- Helena Pre-Release Center- Director- 10 years corrections.
Chief Troy McGee- Helena Police Department 20+ years
Captain David Fradette- Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office
Annette Carter- State Probation and Parole Officer II, Adult Probation since 1999 and juvenile probation before that.
Tim Meloy- State Probation and Parole IPPO- 26 years in corrections.
Ginny Kalchbrenner- Co-Owner of Merit Mechanical
Diane Potter- Lewis and Clark Library
David Blade- Retired, Mt. Department of Justice- Auditor- 14 years Law Enforcement/Corrections
Murray Strong- Environmental Specialist at Stahly Engineering
Cindy Donnell- USDA Rural Development- Area Specialist
Matt Elsaesser- City of Helena- City Commissioner
Maggie Corbett- Retired State Probation and Parole Officer.

Gallatin County Re-entry Program – Bozeman
Mike Thatcher, CEO: Established: 2005

Melissa Kelly, Program Director GCRP, LAC
Under Sheriff Jim Oberhofer – Has been on screening committee since inception (3 years)
Mark Tymrak - Chief of Bozeman Police screening committee since inception (3 years)
Steve Ette, PO II, Gallatin County Probation/Parole – screening committee since inception (3 years)
Ben Dirks, Community representative, involved in Church work for 25 years, inner city HS counselor for 25 years in Michigan. Mr. Dirks spent his summer working with probate court – juvenile problems, and is currently a community observer of Treatment Court of Gallatin County for the last 4.5 years. Mr. Dirks has been on the GCRP screening committee since inception